

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 07466 261806Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: BOVIN ANALYSIS OF ISRAELI ELECTIONS IN IZVESTIYA

REF: MOSCOW 7109

SUMMARY: MAY 26 IZVESTIYA CARRIES SOPHISTICATED ANALYSIS OF
LIKUD VICTORY IN RECENT ISRAELI ELECTIONS WHICH SUGGESTS
THAT DISGRUNTLED ISRAELI VOTERS WOULD JUST AS LIKELY
HAVE MOVED TOWARD THE LEFT AS TOWARD THE RIGHT IF THAT HAD
BEEN A VIABLE POLITICAL OPTION, AND CONCLUDES WITH A NOTE
OF WISTFUL OPTIMISM THAT LIKUD, HAVING ACHIEVED POWER,
MIGHT NOW BEGIN TO MODERATE ITS FORMER EXTREMIST POSITIONS.
END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 07466 261806Z

1. IN RELATIVELY NON-POLEMIC AND RATIONAL MANNER,
IZVESTIYA POLITICAL COLUMNIST ALEKSANDR BOVIN WRITES
A LENGTHY ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE ISRAELI
ELECTION FOR THE MAY 26 IZVESTIYA. WHILE HE CITES
WESTERN AND ARAB PRESS SOURCES TO INDICATE WIDE-
SPREAD FEELING THAT THE ISRAELI "STEP TO THE RIGHT"

HAS MADE THE ME SITUATION MORE UNCERTAIN AND MORE DANGEROUS. BOVIN CAREFULLY AVOIDS DRAWING THAT CONCLUSION. INDEED, IN HIS OWN CONCLUSION, AFTER SUMMARIZING LIKUD'S HARD LINE FOREIGN POLICY PROGRAM, HE SUGGESTS THAT "OPPOSITION SLOGANS" TRANSFORMED INTO GOVERNMENT POLICY SOMEHOW OFTEN BEGIN TO BE QUALIFIED AND TO LOSE THEIR SHARP EDGES. SYMPTOMATIC, SAYS BOVIN, HAS BEEN LIKUD LEADER BEGIN'S ATTEMPT IN THE PAST FEW DAYS TO COVER THE EXTREMISM OF HIS OWN POSITIONS BY INDICATING HIS READINESS TO GO TO GENEVA, TO MEET WITH EGYPTIAN, SYRIAN, AND SAUDI RULERS, AND TO FORM A "GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY." HOWEVER, BOVIN TEMPERES THIS OPTIMISTIC NOTE WITH A PARTING ADMONITION THAT MUCH DEPENDS ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENTAL COALITION AND ON INTERNATIONAL FACTORS.

2. BOVIN ATTRIBUTES LIKUD'S VICTORY TO VOTERS' DISSATISFACTION WITH THE LABOR PARTY'S SEEMING INABILITY TO SOLVE ISRAEL'S CONTINUING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AS WELL AS TO VOTER IRRITATION OVER THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY AND THE CORRUPTION AND SCANDALS OVER FINANCIAL MACHINATIONS OF LEADERSHIP. HE PRESENTS VIEW THAT ISRAELI VOTERS MIGHT, UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, HAVE JUST AS EASILY SWUNG TO THE LEFT AS WELL AS TO THE RIGHT. BUT, HE SAYS, THERE IS NO STRONG, DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION ON THE LEFT IN ISRAEL AND, AS A RESULT, THE WEAKENED POSITION OF THE RULING COALITION ALMOST AUTOMATICALLY MEANT A STRENGTHENED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 07466 261806Z

ING OF THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION.

3. MORE COMPLICATED, SAYS BOVIN, IS THE FOREIGN POLICY ASPECT BEHIND THE LIKUD VICTORY. HE ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THE "PARADOXICAL SITUATION" OF ISRAELI VOTERS VOLUNTARILY CHOOSING A POLITICAL PATH WHICH WILL SEEMINGLY WORSEN THEIR POLITICAL CONDITION BY DESCRIBING THE FEELING AMONG ISRAELIS THAT IF AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS SITUATION WERE TO DEVELOP IN THE ME, WASHINGTON WOULD BACK ISRAEL AND WOULD BE FORCED TO LESSEN ITS INSISTENCE ON ISRAELI CONCESSIONS TO THE ARAB COUNTRIES. IN THE ONLY ANTI-U.S. COMMENT IN HIS ARTICLE, BOVIN WRITES THAT JUST THIS SORT OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL ALLOWS THE ISRAELI "ADVENTURERS" TO REPEATEDLY THROW DOWN A CHALLENGE TO WORLD PUBLIC OPINION AND UNDERMINE A SETTLEMENT OF THE ME CONFLICT. BOVIN ALSO DESCRIBES THE IDEA, NOVEL FOR SOVIET READERS, THAT MANY ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT U.S. PRESSURE HAD FORCED THE LABOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT CONTRARY TO

ISRAELI NATIONAL INTERESTS BY MAKING TOO MANY CONCESSIONS TO THE ARAB COUNTRIES.

4. COMMENT: THE GENERAL TONE OF BOVIN'S ARTICLE IN THE GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER IZVESTIYA IS A FURTHER SIGNAL OF CONTINUED SOVIET CAUTION IN EVALUATING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LIKUD'S VICTORY. WHILE BOVIN DOES CONCLUDE HIS ARTICLE ON A SLIGHTLY UPBEAT NOTE, IN CONTRAST TO THE FIRST RATHER NEGATIVE SOVIET ANALYSIS WHICH APPEARED IN PRAVDA MAY 20 (REFTEL), HE HAS STILL LEFT HIS READERSHIP WITH A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CURRENT NATIONALISTIC MOOD OF THE ISRAELI ELECTORATE AND WITH A CLEAR WARNING OF POSSIBLE TROUBLE AHEAD IN THE ME.
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